

Invasive Species: Federal Actions the Nation Deserves

Although invasive species may cause local damage, their impacts go well beyond state borders. The Office of Technology Assessment's 1993 report and countless others call for federal action to address invasive species problems, but progress so far has been woefully inadequate. However, there *are* opportunities to act. We call upon the U.S. Congress and President Bush to immediately take the following steps to benefit our Nation:

ACTIONS NEEDED ON CAPITOL HILL

Immediately pass the National Aquatic Invasive Species Act. The National Aquatic Invasive Species Act (NAISA) is comprehensive legislation that, if adequately funded and implemented, will substantially increase our ability to prevent and control damaging aquatic introductions, for example by reducing the discharge of invasive species from ships.



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The act will protect the United States' coastal and inland waters from invasive species in two ways. First, it will create specific new tools and strengthen existing ones. For example, NAISA establishes a mandatory ballast water management program to reduce the rate at which invasives arrive in ships' ballast water. Also, NAISA provides for pre-import screening of aquatic organisms not yet in trade; for erecting dispersal barriers to keep aquatic

invaders from moving among watersheds; and for states to receive more resources to prepare and implement their aquatic invasive species management plans.

Second, NAISA will implement the broad framework recommended by the National Invasive Species Council, the Global Invasive Species Programme, and others as necessary for an effective program. This framework calls for a program—coordinated among all levels of government and with the private sector—that includes: prevention; early detection; rapid response; longer-term control and management; research and risk analysis; and public education and outreach.

We commend Representatives Wayne Gilchrest (R-MD) and Vernon Ehlers (R-MI), Senator Carl Levin (D-MI), and 113 cosponsors in the House and Senate for their initial leadership on this legislation and urge them to work toward its passage.

Enact Executive Order 13112 on invasive species into federal law. This will allow the National Invasive Species Council to better integrate the actions of all federal agencies that deal with invasive species. Authorizing the Council will significantly increase coordination among agencies and departments to ensure that federal efforts are more effective. In addition, codification of the Council will require that the first national invasive species management plan be regularly updated; increase oversight of its implementation; ensure that a broad group of stakeholders advises the Council; and stipulate that federal agencies identify and limit their own actions which introduce or spread invasive species.

We thank Representatives Ehlers and Nick Rahall (D-WV), Senator Mike DeWine (R-OH), and the 31 cosponsors of related Senate and House bills for showing leadership on this issue.

Support funding of an early detection/rapid response system. The United States does not have the ability to systematically and comprehensively detect new species soon after they have been introduced. Therefore, agencies and organizations do not receive information about newly detected species and cannot take quick, effective action to contain or eradicate them. Early detection and rapid eradication of new occurrences are markedly more cost-effective than longer-term control of established populations. An early warning system can only succeed if it is coupled with rapid response capability—the deployment of people and resources to eradicate a plant or animal prior to its establishment or spread.

We support funding that will enable federal and state agencies and private entities to assess newly detected organisms and to take action before a non-native, invasive species becomes established. In particular, it is time to develop and fund a national early warning system—as called for in the national invasive species management plan—that addresses all types of organisms (plants, vertebrate and invertebrate animals, fungi, and other pathogens of plants and wildlife) and integrates a network of trained volunteers with a professional cadre at the local, state, and federal level.

ACTIONS NEEDED FROM THE WHITE HOUSE

Initiate a pre-screening process for new imports. Preventing new introductions of non-native, invasive species is the most cost-effective remedy. Many recent introductions were of species known to be invasive in their country or region of origin or had already demonstrated invasive characteristics in other countries where they had been introduced (e.g., giant salvinia (*Salvinia molesta*), black carp (*Mylopharyngodon piceus*), *Caulerpa taxifolia*). Requiring a risk analysis and pre-screening process for new imports would identify potential problem species before they arrive—prohibiting imports of the most damaging species, reducing deliberate introductions of those likely to be harmful, and providing a sound basis for establishing mitigation measures if species are more harmful than expected.

Initiate major research and public awareness campaigns. We recommend that the federal government promptly undertake a major research campaign to better understand the pathways by which invasive species enter the United States and their impact on our environment and economy. Much of our knowledge regarding the extent and impact of non-native invasive species comes from the study of established populations of single organisms in single environments. This research has resulted in the development of our current management tools, but gaps exist in our understanding of pathways and vectors and in broader, ecosystem-based approaches for managing multiple invaders. In addition, steps should be put in place to transfer this new knowledge from researchers to users and from managers to decision-makers. There is a critical need to enhance the extension and outreach activities associated with the science of invasive species.

Negotiate strict North American standards to limit pests arriving on shipments of plants. The president (or Congress) should support prompt adoption of strong phytosanitary standards now under development by the North American Plant Protection Organization that aim to prevent introduction to North America of insects and diseases transported on imported woody plants. Unintentional introductions of plant pests continue to have significant economic and environmental consequences. For example, recent introductions, such as sudden oak death (*Phytophthora ramorum*) and the citrus longhorned beetle (*Anoplophora chinensis*), have occurred as hitchhikers on imported plants.